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Isneg

V. Death and Burial

A. Death

What is death? What happens after death? What causes death? Let us see what are the answers given by the Isneg to these very interesting and all important questions, and examine them in detail.

1. Concept of Death

Death, if I understand the Isneg mind well, is a change by which a person ceases to exist as an ordinary human being, and, in the state of a *kaduduwá* (soul?), continues to live indefinitely, ultimately at least in the realm of the dead, leaving behind an *innát* (corpse).

This definition needs some explanation.

Death is "a change". I purposely refrain from calling it "a separation or disconnection of two parts", as I doubt very much if the Isneg explicitly consider man, while alive, to consist of more than one element. They know that man has a *baggi* (body), and to this they usually refer as "he (she)" while a person is alive; but I know of no expressions that would lead one to believe that the Isneg explicitly recognize in man two elements which would correspond to our "body" and "soul". Man, while alive, has a *baggi* (body), and the natives do not seem to enter further into the question of his nature. Nevertheless they most certainly believe implicitly that man is composed of two essential parts, as may be proved by the following:

First, when talking about a *kaduduwá* (soul?), they always refer to it as *ya kaduduwána*, "the soul (?) of *him, his* soul (?)", which seems to imply that this *kaduduwá* belongs to him, thus that it is not exactly his own complete self, but only a part of him. It is true that, when speaking about a person after death and not explicitly mentioning the term *kaduduwá*, they simply refer to his *kaduduwá* as "he (she)" without any further qualifications, as if the body, as we understand it, did not belong to him (her) any more; but this does not exclude the fact that, whenever they use the term *kaduduwá*, they always call it "his (her)" *kaduduwá, ya kaduduwána*.

Second, the Isneg know very well that the dead body and the *kaduduwá* belong to one and the same person, as will be seen presently when referring to the tattooing of the body and the clothing of the *innát*, which, the natives believe, greatly influence the state of the *kaduduwá*. Thus, in their eyes, the *kaduduwá* and the *innát* are not exactly strangers to one another. Besides, the objects that are

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761 Besides, the objects that are
placed in the coffin at burial are supposed to be used, not by the
775 corpse, but by the *kaduduwá*, so that the connection between the two
764 continues at least for a certain period after death. Add to this that the *balańóbáń* or revivified *innát* is also definitely known to belong to the dead person as well as his *kaduduwá:* this is proved by the fact that the transformation of the corpse into a *balańóbáń* is supposed to depend on the character of the person, while the latter was still alive, all of which will be explained in due time.

774 Third, the term *kaduduwá* itself. Semantically, and perhaps lin-
197 guistically, the Isneg term *kaduduwá* corresponds to the Iloko term
775 *kararuá*, "soul". Semantically: both terms have probably an identical meaning; anyhow they most certainly refer to one and the same thing: the spirit of man that continues to live after death. Perhaps linguistically: when we compare several Filipino languages with one another, it is clearly seen that *d* and *r* very often interchange; for instance: Ibanag *nararál* and Iloko *nadadáel* (destroyed), Isneg *matúdog* and Iloko *matúrog* (to sleep), Isneg *adú* and Ibanag *arú* (many). *A* and *o* or *u*, when not bearing the accent, are often interchanged, or at least their pronunciation is blurred and they are hardly to be distinguished from one another; for instance: Isneg *maxudódit* and *maxadódit* (to tell a story), *obóbāt* and *abóbāt* (the ceremony that concludes the period of mourning). And so, linguistically, the distance between Iloko *kararuá* (pronounced *kararuwá*) and Isneg *kaduduwá* does not seem to be very great.

Etymologically, however, Isneg *kaduduwá* and Iloko *kararuá* seem to be entirely different; on the contrary, the Isneg term *kaduduwá* and the Iloko *kaduá* (pronounced *kaduwá*) are one etymologically, although seemingly very different semantically: as *kaduá* in Iloko means "companion.", which in Isneg is rendered by *kabbulón*. Both Isneg *kaduduwá* and Iloko *kaduá* are composed of the stem *duwá* (written *duá* in Iloko), "two", partly reduplicated in Isneg, and the prefix *ka*, indicating companionship, concomitance, etc., in both languages.

In view of all this it seems reasonable to infer that the Isneg seem to consider the spirit that continues to live after death, not exactly as a companion (in this case they would call it *kabbulón*), but as a part of something, a counterpart, something that goes with something else (prefix *ka*), and to which, in numbers, it would correspond as number "two (*duwá*)", not in time and successively or consecutively, but concomitantly (on account of the prefix *ka*).

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These three facts combined prove that the Isneg, at least implicitly, consider a living man as consisting of two elements: the *baggi* or body, of which no more mention is made after death, as an *inndt* (corpse) takes its place, and the *kaduduwd* or spiritual element that continues to live and is usually invisible.

Through death "a person ceases to exist as an ordinary human being". Indeed, the *kaduduwd*, although its life is similar in many respects to that of a living person on earth, is usually quite invisible and "continues to live indefinitely". I say "indefinitely": why not "eternally"? It must be remembered that the Isneg have no notion of eternity as such; they know that the *kaduduwd* continues to live, they never heard of a *kaduduwd* dying, but if it lives eternally, that goes beyond their comprehension, or, to be exact, they never think as far ahead as that. And so what looks to the Isneg as "indefinite" (living on indefinitely), if considered under our own viewpoint, would probably mean "eternal" (living on eternally). The corpse also is far from existing as an ordinary human being. Not that the Isneg consider it to be completely devoid of any animating principle, but that it is dead for the time being, and if it lives afterwards in the state of a *balańóbáń*, its life cannot be compared with that of an ordinary man.

The *kaduduwd* goes to live "ultimately at least in the realm of the dead". This will be explained more fully when referring to the state of man after death.

"Leaving behind an *inndt*". *Inndt* is the body of a man immediately after death, as long as it stays in the house, and before burial, if burial takes place. The *inndt* is dead, it neither moves nor breathes, it needs neither food nor drink. We shall see presently whether the Isneg believe all dead bodies to remain in that state, in the state of *inndt*, until decay sets in.

2. Future Life

What happens after death? And first as to the *kaduduwd*.

The night after a person's death (some say: "at any time after his death"; but this could never mean "immediately after death" on account of the necessity of the *inndt* being clothed), *Kútaw*, the ferryman, or rather the ferry spirit, comes along to bring the *kaduduwd* over the great pond (*lablabbáń*) to the realm of the dead. Here, according to some informants, the *kaduduwd* receives hospitality at *Kútaw*'s house until the latter brings it on its way to the house of its relatives who died before.